



The Newport News comes home from war for a rest.

Virginian-Pilot Photo by S. H. Ringo

Cruiser Back With the Rust Of War Duty

By CLIFFORD HUBBARD
Virginian-Pilot Staff Writer

NORFOLK—A few rusty streaks staining her gray hull, a Marine color guard at stiff attention atop an 8-inch turret, a snappy band blaring brassily from her superstructure, the heavy cruiser Newport News came home from eight months of war Monday. She was welcomed by a colorful crowd of 1,200 and another Navy band on Pier 5. The crowd made a rush for the gangplank and the cruiser's men, senior Navy officers and Chamber of Commerce greeters had to climb quickly to stay ahead of it.

The rusty streaks were from hard service, not enemy gunfire. But that was not because the North Vietnamese hadn't tried to hit her.

Her skipper, Capt. Edwin K. Snyder, said the enemy had fired on the Newport News 16 different times, including one day when almost 300 projectiles fell in the area around her.

Snyder said that it was 130mm artillery, with some of it possibly as large as 150mm. "We had some awful big splashes," he said.

And the reason the Newport News was not hit was a matter of luck, her skipper claimed. "They (the North Vietnamese) are shooting over there and they are shooting well, but they don't seem to hit," he said.

The cruiser fired 59,421 rounds, much of it 8-inch from her three triple-gun rapid-fire turrets. Most of it fell in and about the Demilitarized Zone in support of embattled Marines there, Snyder said.

A visitor he expects to see shortly is another Snyder, Capt. J. Edward Snyder Jr., skipper of the battleship New Jersey. The New Jersey will enter Hampton Roads May 20 to load ammunition and conduct exercises off the Virginia Capes.

She is scheduled to reach Vietnam in September, and Edwin Snyder expects questions on the Newport News' experiences from Edward Snyder of the New Jersey.

"I know that I went around to people who had had experience over there before I went. I expect he'll be in to see me for the same reason," the Newport News Snyder said.

He said there is a big difference in the capability of the cruiser's guns and the nine 16-inch weapons aboard the New Jersey.

The rapid fire guns of the Newport News can blanket an area, but unless they score a direct hit on a heavily fortified bunker or

emplacement, they won't do much damage, he said.

The projectiles of the New Jersey, each weighing over a ton, have only to land relatively close to a bunker to destroy it, he said. In addition, they can penetrate many more feet of concrete than can the smaller shells of the Newport News.

His last words in a brief interview had to do with the performance of his crew.

"The one thing about this ship is the fantastic job these youngsters do," he said.